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COMMERCIAL NEWS

International Congress of Photogrammetry

Photogrammetry is the science of making surveys by means of photography, more specifically the process of making maps from aerial photographs. Switzerland occupies an outstanding position in this field, as was proved by the exhibition held recently in London on the occasion of the 9th International Congress of Photogrammetry, which was placed under the patronage of Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. In fact, the Swiss firm of Wild exhibited on this occasion the most complete assortment of apparatus for photogrammetry ever seen at any similar exhibition. This material aroused the interest and the admiration of the specialists from all over the world, numbering about 900, who were taking part in the Congress. This apparatus had been despatched to London in six large British Railways wagons.

The telephone to the rescue of the housewife

The well-known Maggi firm, which manufactures concentrated soups, has installed a new telephonic menus service in several Swiss towns. A housewife who does not know what to prepare for the next meal merely calls a telephone number. She is then able to receive suggestions for menus and practical advice, renewed every day, which will remove all her worries regarding the planning of her meals and relieve her of the necessity of confessing her lack of imagination.

Unprecedented accuracy

This summer the Geneva Observatory recorded a result unprecedented in the history of chronometry. This was in regard to the portable quartz clock which is the smallest in the world and the movement of which has been under observation for 65 days; the average variation in time per day amounted to 0.00 second, i.e., to less than one-hundredth of a second, certified by the movement bulletin of the Observatory. This exceptional result, achieved by a clock manufactured by the firm of Patek Philippe, in Geneva, is certainly deserving of mention.

Work on Grande-Dixence dam reaches new stage

The dam of the Grande-Dixence, which has been under construction for several years, has now attained its total height in one of its sections. Two more

years' work will still be required to bring the whole of the dam to this acclivity. When finished, this cyclopean work will possess a height of 930 feet and a length of 2,300 feet at the top, its thickness being 970 feet at the base and 52 feet at the summit; the volume of concrete run will exceed 176 million cubic feet and the volume of water retained in this way, namely 14,125 million cubic feet, will render possible the annual production of 1,400 million kilowatt-hours, i.e., 10 per cent of the total production of electric power now taking place in Switzerland during the space of one year.

Suchard's new premises inaugurated

In October 1957, fire destroyed part of the Suchard chocolate factory, at Serrières, near Neuchâtel. The buildings in question were the oldest ones, in fact those that were put up in 1826 by Philippe Suchard, the founder of that particular make of chocolate and one of the pioneers of the Swiss chocolate industry. The firm has just inaugurated the new buildings which have replaced those destroyed. The new factories have the most modern technical equipment, and in them will continue to be made those products which have contributed towards establishing the renown of Swiss chocolate throughout the world.

Thin aluminium foil, a Swiss invention

It is just fifty years since the aluminium foil industry was born in Switzerland. Its creator, Robert Victor Neher, had the idea of using sheets of aluminium for the making of air-tight casings for free balloons, but those which already existed on the market were not suitable, because they were too small; he then had the idea of manufacturing such sheets in accordance with another process, that of laminating without end, which he invented with the help of some friends. Although it was found that these sheets could not be used for balloons, Neher and his friends discovered that these thin sheets of aluminium were admirably suited for other purposes, more especially for packaging. Since then, thin aluminium sheets — which can now be goffered, varnished, and printed upon — have conquered the whole world and are being used for no end of technical and artistic purposes, of which the wrapping of chocolate is perhaps the best known. Whereas half a century ago production of

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this aluminium foil amounted to from 13 to 22 yards per minute, the modern rolling-mills made by the Neher firm have an output of from 440 to 600 yards per minute. To-day the annual production of this commodity exceeds 4,000 metric tons and exports go to all parts of the globe.

Economic importance of the Gotthard line

During the first nine months of this year the railway line which passes through the St. Gotthard Tunnel made possible the transport from Italy to Switzerland of 100,000 wagons of food, some of this being for direct imports and some in transit. The figure shows Switzerland's importance for European railway traffic.

Increase in electricity output in Switzerland

Last August the production of the Swiss electricity plants attained 1,218 million kilowatt-hours, as compared with 1,078 Kwh. in August 1959. Calculated per working day, this production has increased by 12 per cent in one year.

Swiss stamp in honour of UN

On 24th October Switzerland issued a large-sized 5-franc stamp in honour of the United Nations. This new vignette, which is in blue, represents the European seat of the United Nations — which is, of course, in Geneva — with Lake Leman and Mont-Blanc in the background.

LABOUR PROBLEMS

By CHOPARD

The Swiss Federation of Trade Unions, which is the most important employees' organisation in the country, recently held its triennial Congress, in Basle. This is in no way a spectacular event. But, in a world full of "alarums and excursions", it is perhaps just because of this that it deserves to be mentioned as being something which belongs to Swiss continuity. During the course of this Congress, the Federation of Trade Unions confirmed its adherence to democratic institutions and to a social and economic régime which, however, makes it possible to improve employees' conditions, in a constant manner, without any recourse to force or to State interventions which limit individual freedoms in an arbitrary manner. At the same time, the Congress expressed certain criticisms and demanded that social insurances should be developed at a more rapid rate and adapted better to the increase in the general prosperity. These, however, are only natural criticisms, due to the fact that the social conscience is always in advance of actions and, more especially, of the legislative machinery. This machinery is very slow in a democratic country like Switzerland, where the Law is not the expression of the will of a dictator, of a clique, or of Parliament alone, but of the will of the people, in their entirety.